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BY REV. ASA D. SMITH,

Pastor of the Brainerd Presbyterian Church, New York.

IMPORTANCE OF A SCRIPTURAL MINISTRY.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—II. TIMOTHY, 3: 16, 17.

By the term "scripture" here, the Books of the Old Testament—those accredited by the Jews, and with which Timothy was early familiar—were doubtless primarily intended. Yet is the text, in its spirit, quite as applicable to the New Testament; and it may be taken as embracing the whole completed canon. "The man of God" is the minister of the gospel; and it is with reference to him, the Bible is here commended. Inspired of God, it is precious to all; but in the work to which he is called, it has a peculiar and transcendent value. It meets all the demands of that work. It is profitable for "doctrine," or the unfolding of divine truth; for "reproof," or the confutation of error; for "correction," or the rebuke of evil practices; for "instruction in righteousness," or in the whole course of Christian duty. By it—and by it alone—is the man of God made "perfect," or, as the word is explained in the subsequent clause, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We depart not, then, from the scope of the text, nor overlook nor misapply one of its particulars, when we derive from it the subject of discourse assigned by the Synod to this evening—"THE IMPORTANCE OF A SCRIPTURAL MINISTRY."

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I. But what mean we, it is well that we inquire, at the outset, somewhat particularly, by a scriptural ministry? There may be, there is often, mistake on this point. We touch not, on the present occasion, the *warrant* of the ministry; we concern ourselves rather with its *functions*. The inquiry now in hand is, not *who* may minister, but *how* they should minister. The general answer is, scripturally;—for all their work they are to be furnished from the full armory, the exhaustless storehouse of the divine word. They are to be emphatically *ministers of the word*—not of form—not of tradition—not of philosophy—not of the dogmas of men. The word is to abide, first of all, in their *hearts*. Truly scriptural preaching can come only of scriptural experience—an experience produced by God's truth, and of that truth the very transcript. Evermore, "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." The preacher, too, should in *understanding*, and *memory* be "mighty in the scriptures." How else shall either the matter or the manner of his discourse be scriptural? From the word are his *doctrines* to be drawn. That he should deem the sufficient and only rule both of faith and practice. He is to bow reverently to its decisions; where it goes, he is to follow—where it stops, he is to stop. What it leaves unrevealed, he may be assured, is either unknowable, or need not be known. Nor is it enough that truth is exhibited by the preacher; it should be exhibited *as* God's truth—just as it lies in his word. His *themes* are to be drawn as directly as possible from the Bible—in the organic forms they take there, rather than as vague and inapprehensible metaphysical abstractions. His *analyses* should be not fanciful or unintelligibly subtle, but either such as the scripture suggests, or as find in it a warrant and a counterpart. The bread of life is to be held forth as God has provided it—not as decomposed. The *proofs* of doctrine, the ties which bind it to the conscience and the heart, are to be fabricated, not of the moonbeams of fancy, or the gossamer of philosophy, but of the adamant of eternal truth. The seal of all his utterances must be a "Thus saith the Lord;" not merely in his own thoughts, but as manifest to the people. His *illustrations* even, he will borrow largely from the Bible. Walking in its ample and wondrous galleries, he will point you, now to a portrait of some evil passion—now to a living model of some Christian virtue; now to a pictured scene of sin's fearful issues—now to a glorious panorama of the triumphs of faith.

Such a preacher is apt to abound in *expository* discourse. In this, he is most likely to present truth *as it is*—in its proportions, shapes, hues, relations;—not as "a dried specimen," but in living beauty; not as a dissevered member, but in its organic connections; not as a single stone from the edifice, but as a perfect and glorious whole. He is most likely, also, to hold it forth *as God's*,

and to hide himself behind its ineffable majesty. Said that prince of pulpit expositors, the late Rev. Dr. Mason, as he gave his farewell counsels to his people, "Do not choose a man who always preaches on insulated texts." Such preachers are not apt to bring out the whole counsel of God; however undesignedly, they will almost certainly keep back some things that are profitable to the people. There is, indeed, a sort of exposition which, with a great show of scripturalness, has little of the reality. Let it not be confounded with that we commend. "There is a *caro* and *spiritus*," says Cudworth, "a flesh and a spirit, a body and a soul, in all the writings of the scriptures. It is but the flesh and body of divine truths that is printed upon paper; which many moths of books and libraries do only feed upon; many walking skeletons of knowledge that bury and entomb truths in the living sepulchres of their souls do only converse with; such as never did anything else but pick at the mere bark and rind of truths, and crack the shells of them." Fittingly does this set forth not a little of the scientific and technical "exegesis" of modern times. The hermeneutical apparatus of many an eminent critic, seems to have been specially suited to press out of a text, however unctuous, however it may have nourished the faith and hope of confessors and martyrs, its very life and marrow. As you turn, for example, from the rich and eminently scriptural pages of Luther on the Galatians, to many of the commentaries of his more recent countrymen—not to speak of certain Anglo-Saxon expositors—it is like passing from the Garden of Eden into Ezekiel's valley of vision. The bones there are "very many," and, "lo! they are very dry." There is neither sinew, nor flesh, nor skin upon them, nor breath in them.

To complete the outline of the scriptural preacher, we may add, that from the sacred text he *quotes* freely, not for proof only, as has been already noted, but for enforcement and adornment. Many a precedent for this has he, both in the apostolic writings and in the discourses of our Lord. His pages are resplendent with the gems of inspiration; in his noblest paragraphs they shine out—as they could not fail to do in the most eloquent of human compositions—"as apples of gold in pictures of silver." Nor does he scruple to blend with his own diction, not only for the purpose of exact statement, but of felicitous and impressive allusion, *scripture phraseology*. He is not ignorant of the cry of *cant*, which so many have raised, from the courtiers of the merry Charles to the free-thinking Hume, and from Hume to the semi-sceptical Foster. Even "one John Milton," as Whitlocke called him, Hume declares to be not wholly free "from the cant of former times." It was not the classical and mythological cant of the Paradise Lost he blames, but the evangelic language, or rather the evangelic thought. All sorts of cant are tolerated by these

super-tasteful critics, but what they are pleased to call religious cant. From the miserable legends of heathenism, from the fictions of the ancient classics, from the modern epic poet, and dramatist, and novelist even, you may derive not only the frequent quotation, but many a peculiar turn of your own diction; and you are not only free from censure, but sure of commendation. Homer, Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare, Walter Scott, these all are supposed to be familiar with; these are universal models and authorities. But the Book of God—the Book of all nations and all times—the Book of eternity—this belongs only to a class—this is understood only by the *religionists*; the style that savors much of this, is but “a Babylonish dialect.” The aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion, of which John Foster discourses with so much good sense in some respects, is an aversion not so much to the drapery, as to the living form—not so much to peculiarities of language, as to peculiarities of sense—peculiarities of which the phraseology condemned is often the most exact embodiment. It is not a truly refined taste that is offended, so much as a deeply depraved heart. To think of propitiating such a heart by substituting for a Biblical a courtly and classic phraseology, were about as great folly as if Cromwell and his hosts, in the terrible battle of Dunbar, instead of sounding out, in sublime concert, the hundred and seventeenth Psalm, had daintily chaunted forth some roundelay of the Cavaliers. There is a vein of naturalism in Foster’s views on this subject, which had a fitting development in his notions of future retribution; and which the truly scriptural preacher will heartily eschew. He will not be careful to answer the critics in this matter; he will think much, and make much, of “the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” He will rejoice if, in the very form and pressure of his speech, there be traces of the scriptural style—indications that his thought has been cast in the moulds of inspiration—associations with the divine, potent over human hearts.

We subjoin, only, that in his private labors, the Bible is his great thesaurus. In conference with the disorderly, the backsliding, the tempted, the desponding, the inquiring—in the chamber of sickness, at the bed of death, in the circle of mourners—he values, more than a thousand poor words of his own, a few opposite words from the Book of God. Everywhere, in fine, both in public and in private, he speaks as though God did beseech men by him—as uttering not his own wisdom, but God’s—as being simply, according to our brief but comprehensive definition at the outset—a Minister of the Word.

II. Such, very imperfectly set forth, is the Ministry to which our text points. We come next to treat of its importance. This

is apparent in relation to the *Minister himself—to the structure of his discourse—and to its effect on the people.*

1. *In relation to the Preacher himself.* He should so preach as to save himself, not merely for his own soul's sake, but that he may the more surely save those who hear him. Even his intellectual advancement is important; and nothing is so conducive to this, as the profound study of the Bible. Nothing so tasks mind, nothing so arouses and invigorates it. Divine truth, indeed, as presented second-hand, may have something of this influence; but the depths of the human author are soon fathomed, the depths of inspiration never. It stirs up the mental powers to commune with a gifted finite mind. How much more to commune with that Infinite Mind, in whose eternal fulness are embosomed the types of all good and true thought, of all being actual or possible! What breadth of understanding comes of such communion! Much industry may be requisite, and a measure of logic, to gather a system of theology from the teachings of men; but far more to think it out from the Bible, to explore independently the sources of truth, to make from the primitive material one's own combinations. He who thus brings forth truth, does it, too, with a most comfortable confidence. When uttering mainly his own or other men's speculations, he is hardly free at all points from misgiving. But when cleaving closely to the divine word, he knows what he affirms. It is not the shifting sand he feels beneath his feet, or the trembling earth, but the moveless rock. And there comes to his soul what is far more important than any merely intellectual advantage, a potent purifying influence. Truth is the objective ground of all holy emotion—it is by the truth all God's people are sanctified. How then can he fail to grow rapidly in grace, who, according to the pattern we have set forth, is a student, and a minister of truth—whose mind it permeates, a part of whose very self it becomes, and of whose communications with others it forms a main element? As he feeds the flock of God, liberally is his own soul fed. Abiding in the region of the divine, he becomes more and more acclimated, he feels more and more truth's assimilating and transforming power. "With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," he is "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." No more efficient means could be devised, my brethren, to raise the tone of piety in the sacred office, than to bring about a higher degree of scripturalness in the discharge of all its functions, and, as involved in this, a closer intimacy with the divine word. When the ministers of the Gospel are eminently Bible-men, then, and then only, are they eminently spiritual men.

2. Nor is the importance of scripturalness in the preacher less apparent as we pass next to *the structure and cast of his discourse.* This has been already set forth in general; our design now is to

glance at a few particulars, or to show, in other words, that in the sort of preaching insisted on, there will be combined all the elements of profitable and powerful discourse.

This might be presumed from the fact that the Bible is taken as a model. Little as we know of the human mind, and of the best method of reaching its hidden springs, and touching its mystic chords, it is no wonder there has been much debate about the right manner of preaching, and many practical mistakes and failures withal. But God made the mind; God knows its every principle of attraction and repulsion—its inmost chambers and its lowest depths. And *for* the mind—suited to it as light to the eye, or as music to the ear—he made the Bible. He made it not for one mind, but for all minds. It is God's great sermon—or book of sermons—to the human race. It is the discourse of the Infinite Rhetorician, and to all human rhetoricians—not only for substance, but as to all leading points of manner—a perfect pattern. The more you preach as God preaches, not only the truer, but the more eloquent is your discourse. Hardly a greater desideratum is there, in our schools of the prophets, than a book of sacred rhetoric, drawn inductively from the Bible. Such a book would cast into the shade all other works of the kind.

But, passing to the particulars we had in mind, the discourse of the scriptural preacher will be distinguished, first, by its *soundness*. This is, of course, its most valuable attribute. He will preach the truth, the whole truth, the truth exactly; he will corrupt not, warp not, color not. Excellence of manner, else, were of little consequence. This purity of doctrine comes only from a close adherence to the word of God. From what other source can the gospel minister gather the matter of his teaching? Christianity is a revelation—it is found only on the pages of the Bible—though reasonable, it is not of reason. The field of Inspiration is the Goshen, where alone is light; all without is thick darkness. Even what is called natural theology is little indebted to fallen and corrupt nature; its truths may be mainly traced back to revelation. They are the echoes of voices from heaven heard of old in Eden, or in the dwellings of the patriarchs, or from the mount that burned. Nay what the human mind claims to originate, is often borrowed directly, though unconsciously, from the completed canon of scripture.

Christianity, besides, is not only above, but against nature. Need enough there were of keeping close to Inspiration, if all its truths, profound and mysterious as many of them are, were in harmony with the human heart. But the depraved heart likes them not. If it corrupts them not intentionally, it is yet apt to do it unconsciously. Even the preacher is in danger of this; a secret tendency to error there is in the best of men. The humbling doctrines of the Bible, how likely to be somewhat modified! Its mysteries, for example, how prone is the pride of intellect either to repudiate

them, or to explain them away! What a distortion of truth has sometimes resulted from the inordinate love of system! How have the plain and simple verities of Revelation been strained out of shape, yea, metamorphosed into error, in accommodation to some cherished theory! A benevolence has been inculcated more disinterested than that the law enjoins—a submission to God little better than rank enmity. What havoc has been made of the faith by philosophical subtlety—by nice analyses, and transcendental refinements, and specious and captivating generalizations!

As you look over the writings of those who in these and other ways depart from the truth, you will almost always be struck with their want of scripturalness. True, they sometimes show great industry and expertness in wrestling scripture; but more commonly they have little to do with it. There is no savor of it in their style. It is seldom quoted, whether for illustration or for proof. They have evidently walked more in the groves of the Academy than by the sea of Tiberias, or in the way to Bethany; they have listened oftener at the porch of philosophy, than at the gate of heavenly wisdom. You think, as you read, of Sabellius rather than John, of Schleiermacher, or Strauss, or Swedenborg, or Madame Guyon, rather than Paul. You cannot resist the impression, that it is their own logic they are resting on, rather than the word of God—their own speculations they are holding forth, rather than the mind of the Spirit. The Bible seems to teach, for instance, the resurrection of the body—in the plainest language it does teach it. But science is wiser than what is clearly written. It sees not how the dead are raised up, or “with what body” they come; and so it affirms, that when men die “the resurrection is past already, and overthrows the faith of some.” The Bible appears to teach, and good men in every age have received, the doctrine of the Trinity. But eagle-eyed philosophy has taken the matter in hand; it has found difficulties in the old faith, and it has fabricated a better. The old proof-texts need not trouble us; if noticed at all, there are metaphysical solvents in readiness, which will speedily dispose of them. A sort of Trinity is indeed left us. But it has been discovered in Germany, and echoed in America, that when the heavens and the earth are dissolved, it is not improbable it will be dissolved with them! Much do such theologues prate of the spirit of the age, and of progress. But the only spirit on which God smiles, is the spirit of profound reverence for inspiration; the only real progress, is progress in the knowledge of his word. “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?”

Another element of excellence in the sort of preaching for which we plead, is its *spirituality*. By that only is the human spirit savingly affected. But that may be lacking, even when there

is no denial of fundamental truth. The themes of the preacher may be at fault. He may dwell mainly on the mere ethics of Christianity; and these may be presented, not in the evangelic, but rather in the pagan shape. Of many a man may it be said—

“How oft, when Paul has served him for a text,
Has Plato, Tully, Epicletus preached.”

The forms of Christianity—its mere drapery—may be made unduly prominent. Political matters may be improperly introduced, or matters of mere temporal advantage. Subjects of discourse sometimes find their way into the pulpit, hardly more spiritual than if the preacher had held forth on roads and aqueducts. Some singular, *outrè* topic may be selected; curiosity may be catered for, rather than the conscience and the heart. A theologico-literary theme may be introduced—a topic for mere entertainment. Pulpit divertisements have in our times become much too frequent for the good of the church. If the theme be ever so spiritual, the manner of treating it may be objectionable. You may listen only to cold logic, intangible abstractions, or mere sentiment and imagination. Or, in the abundance of a certain sort of “illustration,” you may almost fancy yourself to be hearing a running commentary on the Percy Anecdotes. The great spiritualities of the gospel may be well nigh buried out of sight. Now, from these and other unspiritual modes of preaching, the truly scriptural minister will be delivered. “The words that I speak unto you,” says our Lord, “they are spirit and they are life.” In lower degree, yet certainly, will that discourse be spirit and life, of which the words of Christ are at once the material and the model.

As nearly allied to spirituality, we may mention next *simplicity*. This is of two sorts—simplicity of thought and simplicity of language. For the purpose of impression, simplicity of *thought* is important. Neither discourse excessively analytic, nor a metaphysical representation of truth, has much effect on the common people.

“The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed.”

To move them, you must deal with aspects rather than with essences, with organisms rather than atoms; you must enact the painter or the historian, rather than the philosopher. And just this is the method of the Bible—the method especially of Him who spake as never man spake. True, in one sense, the Bible is eminently metaphysical; but in another and more common sense, it is one of the least metaphysical books in the world. It deals chiefly with simple verities, in their simplest forms. On a thousand points, which have called forth ponderous and profitless tomes of human speculation, it affirms and enjoins rather than

explains; or, if it explains, it is by convenient synonyms, by easy and apprehensible comparisons. Not from recondite matters does it borrow its illustrations, but from the most obvious objects of nature, or the commonest scenes of life.

Nor is simplicity of thought alone to be learned from the Bible; it teaches also true simplicity of *language*. Not that it lacks beauty or sublimity; in these points it has no parallel. To beauty and sublimity, indeed, in their highest forms, true simplicity is essential—that simplicity which is the opposite of artifice, affectation, verbal confusion and obscurity, and every species of mannerism. From the rage for fine writing, which has sprung up in these days of high civilization, the pulpit is unhappily not always free. It has an ambitious glitter, at times, a gaudy and cumbersome efflorescence, for the correction of which nothing is more effective than intimate communion with scripture models. In the Bible, how obviously is thought first and style last; how is style, rather, naturally evolved from thought—how does it *grow* out of it, consubstantial with it, as the rind upon the plant, or the bark upon the forest tree. Who can imagine the apostle Paul thinking how he shall write a fine sounding paragraph, or Isaiah how he shall verbally polish and ornament a prophecy? The style is instinct with thought—it is but a transparency through which thought shines.

To no other book is the general literature of our mother tongue so much indebted, as to the standard version of the Bible. No other book has contributed so much to form the best qualities in the style of our best preachers and theological writers. Take, as one of the most striking illustrations of this, John Bunyan. Whence came that purity of diction, that beautiful simplicity and naturalness, which have made the *Pilgrim's Progress* a favorite with all classes of readers in all Christendom? Not from the rules of rhetoric; for of these he had little knowledge. Not from a large acquaintance with literature; he was emphatically "a man of one book." It was from that intense study of the Bible, and that intimate acquaintance with it, to which his deep and absorbing experiences led him. When he lay "trembling under the mighty hand of God, continually torn and rent by the thundering of His justice," this made him, he says, "with careful heart and watchful eye, with great fearfulness, to turn over every leaf, and with much diligence, mixed with trembling, to consider every sentence, together with its natural force and latitude." How could the habit thus formed, a habit he lost not in brighter days, fail to affect powerfully, not his thought alone, but the dress it assumed?

Another excellence likely to be attained by the scriptural preacher is *originality*. We mean not by this that he will invent new truths. It may be said of the spiritual as well as the natural

creation, that "the heavens and the earth are finished, and all the host of them." There is much justice in the remark, "He who seeks novelties will be sure to preach fancies." What we mean by originality is, the presenting of old truths in new relations, or in a new light. It is the utterance of one's own thoughts in one's own way, and with that freshness which ever attaches itself to the free action of mind, to the full development of one's idiosyncrasy. Let it not be thought, that looking at the Bible as a model hinders originality. As well might it be hindered in the painter or the statuary, by the study of nature, or of the galleries of Versailles, or Florence, or Rome. If there be aught of creative power in the soul, nothing so effectually stirs it up as a model. Rules may form mediocrity—models awaken genius. Originality in all human science, it may be further noted, comes of resorting to its sources, its primordial elements. A mere copyist is he, for example, who writes a History of the Reformation from the perusal of Mosheim and Milner, or who adopts, with little or no observation, or attention to his own consciousness, a theory of volition from Brown or Stewart. He who begins with principles, on the other hand, or primary facts or proofs, must be original. So is it with him who goes directly to the Bible for his theology. If any fabric be reared, it must be his own. Who can doubt that, if, instead of that substantial reiteration of the comments and systems of others, which forms the staple of so many pulpit productions, the scriptures were primarily resorted to, and solely relied on, there would be a great gain, in point at once of freshness and impressiveness?

From such a method of study and composition, we remark further, there would result the excellent attribute of *fulness*. Not a plethora of words; of these there is seldom a lack. It is a fulness of thought we mean. "Reading," says Lord Bacon, "maketh a full man;" but there is no reading in this respect like the reading of the scriptures. There is not merely in them "the seeds of things," but the seeds of *all* things. Gather together all the theological libraries of ancient and modern times; and so far as you have anything of truth before you, it is all to be found within the lids of the Bible. The scriptures, too, are wonderfully suggestive. We say not, with the rabbins, that there hang mountains of sense on every letter; but we may say, there are volumes of sense in every line. Simple as the Bible is—a Book of principles—its paragraphs and sentences cannot but have innumerable relations. Select whatever theme you please, and go to the scriptures for the passages which bear upon it; and how shall one text suggest another, and each suggest some new thought; and how, as you dwell upon the thronging elements of discourse, shall they crystalize into beautiful forms of ratiocination or illustration. The suggestiveness of the Bible is truly philosophical. It is a

wonderful fabric, "fitly compacted together by that which every joint supplieth." As you follow out the affinities of truth there will result, not a heterogenous conglomeration, but a living, perfect organism. It will be not so much a process of building, as of growth from a germ. Greatly thus is the work of composition facilitated. Instead of wearily tasking himself to say something, the preacher will always have something to say. Around his theme apposite texts shall cluster, and apposite thoughts; they shall, "like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well ordered files as he could wish, fall aptly into their own places." Nor need we fear that the Book of Revelation, any more than the book of nature, will be exhausted. As, to the finer and still finer telescope, star after star shines out in the sky, so shall it ever be in the heaven of God's truth, to the eye of studious faith.

To the quality of fulness, that of *variety* is intimately allied. It has been well remarked, that a metaphysical way of speech soon exhausts the circle of sacred topics. Reduce the objects of the material world to their ultimate elements, or even to genera and species, and these are soon told, and will soon, as reiterated, become wearisome. But we never tire of nature's forms just as she presents them. Infinitely diversified, and ever new and delightful, is her broad landscape. So with the truth of God. Reduce it to essences and classified abstractions—confine yourself, as in such case you must, to a narrow round of philosophical dogmas—and your themes soon become familiar and powerless. Who has not noted the sameness of certain metaphysical preachers? But lead forth your people among the deep valleys and high hills, the murmuring brooks and broad rivers, the variegated plains, and the many-hued forests—amid all the boundless diversity of the world of Revelation—and their interest shall never flag. There is no class of human relations or human duties, which the Bible does not touch—no possible conjuncture of human circumstances but it meets—no phase of human character but it sets forth—no field of appropriate illustration whence it draws not its materials. Though the same truth is exhibited thousands of times, it is yet never the same. These many presentations, like the leaves of the forest tree, or the spires of grass, or the faces of men, though all alike, are yet all unlike. So will it be with the presentations of him who makes the Bible his study and his model.

We might speak, also, of the *directness* and *boldness* to be learned from the scriptures, so much more effective than a periphrastic, essay-like, timid fashion of speech. We might advert to the power of the Bible, fully possessing the preacher, in promoting *life and fervor in delivery*. We might dwell on the relations of a scriptural habit to that quality called *tact*—a quality so essential to wise and profitable ministrations, whether public or private.

Who so likely to understand human nature, as the man who studies profoundly those pictures of it which God has drawn? Who so apt to be discreet and prudent, as the man who addicts himself continually to divine wisdom, who meditates constantly on those patterns of well-judged and faithful ministration which the Bible presents? But leaving these points, we must pass to glance at one other important characteristic of scriptural discourse, its *symmetry*. We mean not the symmetry of a single sermon, though on that point much might be said; but the symmetry of one's whole teaching—of the total impression made.

On this point, there is often great deficiency—deficiency by reason of which there is a great curtailment of usefulness. To a symmetrical ministry it is essential, that the several parts of our compound nature should be addressed in due proportion. Yet how often is the intellect almost solely appealed to, while the heart is left untouched, and the conscience sleeps. Not unfrequently, again, are the feelings only dealt with; so that if any sort of piety result, it will be unintelligent and fitful. Nor is it a strange thing to meet with a preacher, who perpetually belabors the conscience, as if man had nothing else, or as if that could repent and believe; as if the utmost working of conscience would transcend the religion of devils; or as if to be perpetually dealing blows at it, were not the sure way to hammer it into hardness. Here, again, is a man whose preaching is almost exclusively subjective. If he arouse thought in his hearers at all, it is only to keep it in that narrow sphere, their own polluted and miserable selves. Here is another who is too entirely objective. So little has he to do with human consciousness and experience, that his people almost forget that truth is at all concerned with them. They come to regard it as something to be known rather than possessed, to be looked at rather than felt. Here is a preacher intent only on outside cleansing; here another, who neglecting that, dwells only on inward excellence. Here is one wholly absorbed in what he calls *progress*—a troublesome ultra-radical; here another intent only on holding back—a hardly less troublesome ultra-conservative. Now, without specifying further, nothing tends so to counteract and correct all extremes as addictedness to God's word. In that there is nothing one-sided—no malformation of doctrine; but, as in the works of God, there is everywhere a just proportion, a beautiful and glorious symmetry. Symmetrical will be his preaching, who in the temper of his heart, and in the shaping of his thought, bears the deep and distinct impress of the Bible.

3. Such are some of the elements of excellence which will be more or less manifest in the truly scriptural minister's discourse. We pass to speak briefly, in conclusion, of *the effect of that discourse on the people*. On this point, indeed, the remarks under the preceding head had all a bearing. But there are other things

worthy of a succinct notice. It is one effect of such preaching that it leads the people to exalt, not the preacher, but God's word. If they see that he studies it much, it will lead them to study it much. If they perceive that to him it is the end of all controversy, and the chief of all knowledge, so will it be to them. "There shall be like people, like priest." And surely a higher service can hardly be done, than to enthrone the Bible in the love and reverence of a community. — The scriptural preacher will speak, too, with *authority*. His hearers will feel that, a worm though he is, it is God who speaks through him; and to the voice divine the conscience will respond. — To the spiritually-minded such preaching is peculiarly grateful—nothing else satisfies them. With the devout Mrs. Graham, they often sigh for more of "the italics" in sermons. Or, failing to be fed, they may feel that something is wanting, hardly able to tell what. There is, indeed, no ministry so sure, as that we commend, to be generally acceptable—in all places and among all classes, with the high and the low, the learned and the unlearned. Were there more of the Bible in our pulpits, there would probably be less change there. The bonds which bind a minister and his people together, are in no way so fastened as by the iron rivets of the word. True, a man quite deficient in this respect may sometimes be greatly admired. Men may talk, as they leave the house of God, of his fine gestures, or fine tones, or fine figures, or fine philosophy. He may be unto them as "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." They may deem that he is the preacher, and that all good preaching will die with him. But how little thought do they take of the truth uttered! How evident is it, that the voice of the lauded one has but wrought on their ears a gentle titillation—that his discourse has but rolled over their hearts as a polished and pointless retundity! Alas, for the reign of fashion and of worldliness, for the meagre prayer-meetings, and deserted closets, and careless, dying souls under such a ministry!—It is, in fine, on scriptural utterances only, the divine blessing is to be expected. "The word of God," and that alone, is "the sword of the Spirit." The sum of our commission is, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." We may not "add unto" it; we may not "take away from" it; we may not be "as many, which corrupt the word of God." And that word, we are told, "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." It is "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds." When, in the humble and faithful use of it, we honor God, then, and then only, will He put honor upon our ministry; he will "always cause us to triumph in Christ, and make manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place."

Fathers and Brethren,—Is not the subject of our meditations, this evening, eminently suited to the times? In what other direction can we find an effectual barrier against the incoming floods of error? Of many of the views presented, has there not been full confirmation in our own experience? When we have been most intimate with the divine word, has not our own piety been most vigorous—our preparation most ample for the work of the pulpit? Have not our most biblical discourses been those which have told most powerfully on human hearts? In scenes of revival, how has everything called for scripture, and how have we had scripture for everything! What seemed then our work but the simple echoing of the word of God? Is it amiss for us to ask, whether, in this respect, there has been no deterioration in our ministry, or whether, at least, there be not a deficiency? Are we not less scriptural than the Baxters, and Erskines, and Edwardses, of other times—those holy men whom God delighted to bless? May it not be one of the reasons why the influences of divine grace are so withheld from our congregations, that we give the people so much of our mind, and so little of God's? "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that He cannot hear." Searching our hearts on this subject, and reviewing our ways, let us resort anew to the divine word. Let us prove to the utmost its saving power; and we shall feel, as never before, how true and how precious is that declaration—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

SERMON CCCCLXXXVII.

BY REV. ROBERT TURNBULL,

Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Hartford, Ct.

THE THOUGHTS OF GOD.

"O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep."
—PSALMS 92: 5.

"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"—PSALMS 139: 17.

To think is the property of mind, of immaterial and immortal spirit. Matter can be brought into the most complicated relations, the most elaborate and beautiful forms; but it cannot think. It can neither commence nor control a particular course of action. Thought is self-conscious, self-controlling, and appertains to a being of intelligence and will—a being, conscious of its own acts and plans, and capable of commencing, continuing, and directing particular trains of action. Matter may be made the vehicle of thought. It may transmit it by the mouth, the hand, the trumpet, the telegraph, but it cannot make it, cannot control it. Thinking is neither worked out nor ground out. It is neither light, nor heat, nor electricity. It is neither brain nor nerve, eye nor ear, head nor hand; though these all may transmit it, or receive it, under the direction of mind. Thought has nothing in it akin to matter or its motions: it is a thing by itself, an original, independent thing, having characteristics and powers of its own. It belongs to the spirit, and is spiritual in all its manifestations and results. And thus, if spirit is infinite and immortal, thought also is infinite and can never die.

Thought is the only thing free and independent; the only thing conscious and active; the only thing that knows and loves, suffers and rejoices; the only thing that creates and controls; the only thing that is great, and good, and eternal. How wonderful then is thought! How wonderful is man! Above all, how wonderful is God! Ah! what thinking is His. How infinite, how mysterious, how ineffable are His thoughts! "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy *thoughts* are very deep."

We have said that thought is the only thing that loves. But "God is love!" Therefore all His thoughts are love. How tender, then, how generous and kind are those thoughts in reference to us. "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!

how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake I am still with thee."

Here is a great and awful mystery; in itself so stupendous as to appall and overwhelm the soul.—The mind of God; the thinking of the Almighty—the infinite and everlasting thinking of Him, who is above all, through all, and in all. But it is the thinking of love; and this invests the mystery, dark and overpowering in itself, with a sweet and attractive radiance; so that hope springs from the mystery, and rejoices in its depth.

This, we think, was something of the experience of the Psalmist, as detailed in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. Referring to the omnipresence and omniscience of God, he exclaims: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike unto thee. * * * I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Here the Psalmist beheld some of the thinking of God, in his own framework, and in the mysterious spirit by which it is inhabited. He trembled at himself, as a dread and fathomless mystery. But he is instantly reassured, by remembering the loving-kindness of the Lord, and hence he joyfully adds:—"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! when I awake I am ever with thee"—ever resting on the bosom of God,

"Whose love doth keep,
In its complacent arms, the earth, the air, the deep."

Here, then, my beloved brethren, is the mind of God—an infinite, unfathomable mystery, but a mystery of love. Thoughts deeper than the grave, stronger than hell, wider than the universe, more enduring than the everlasting hills,—thoughts awful, mysterious, resistless, appalling,—thoughts boundless, omnipotent, everlasting; but thoughts of love, thoughts of mercy and compassion to the children of men.

Let us consider this great and thrilling subject—the Thoughts of God. In the *first place*, let us inquire whether, and to what extent, the thoughts of God are attainable by us: Secondly, what are some of the Thoughts of God—what, especially, in reference to us, are His leading and most cherished Thoughts; in other words, what are some of the characteristics of God's Thinking.

I. In the *first place*, Are the Thoughts of God attainable by us; and, if so, how and to what extent?

We can reach the thoughts of our fellow-men: they gleam out upon their countenances, echo in their words, appear in their actions. We find them embodied in books, letters, inscriptions, monuments, buildings, canals, railroads, bridges, statues, and paintings. In all these we attain their thoughts, and make them our own. We reach thus, not only the thoughts of our contemporaries, but of those also who lived in past generations—of the Homers and Platos, the Pauls and the Luthers, the Newtons and the Miltons, the Halls and the Howards of by-gone times. By the same means we are able to transmit our thoughts to other lands and other times, and make them attainable even by those who may live at the close of time. It is questionable, however, whether we can attain all the thoughts even of man. There are trains of reflection, and especially trains of emotion, which never reach the surface of the soul; trains of thought and tides of feeling, not only too deep for tears, but too deep for words. Great and original spirits exist, much of whose thinking cannot be understood even when it is expressed, and much of whose thinking is too profound, too delicate and etherial, for words. How vast even the obscurities of Revelation. Ah! there are depths in the human soul and in the human heart, not attainable by any of us; depths which God alone can sound. Still, the thoughts of our fellow-men, generally speaking, are attainable by us; and oh! how interesting, sometimes, is the pursuit and acquisition of such thoughts. To reach, nay more, to become familiar with the thoughts of Plato, of Paul, of Luther, of Bacon, of Edwards, of Pascal, and of Foster, and not only so, but to make them our own, to weave them, like threads of gold, into the web of our own thinking, how desirable, how delightful!

So also we might attain the thoughts of angels, if we could only see their godlike faces, gleaming in the sunlight of heaven; or hear their mystic voices, uttering a language familiar to us; or read their thoughts, embodied in books, in works, or in actions. By these, and other means which are conceivable, we might, in some degree, understand and appreciate the thinking of angels. Moreover, what an acquisition this! Take one of them, for example, who, six thousand years ago, sang, with his compeers, the creation of the world, and has lived, in purity and blessedness, from that time till now, with all the accumulated treasures of his vast and varied experience, his profound and protracted thinking, in the very presence-chamber of the King of kings, and amid "the thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers" of the heavenly state, with all that he has gathered from his meditations on nature and on God, and especially on the great work of Redemption by the Cross of Christ: let such an one communicate to us some

of his most intimate and cherished thoughts, on the nature and destiny of man, the work and glory of Christ, the beauty of holiness, and "the life everlasting,"—what an ineffable attainment, what an unspeakable blessing! How, in its unutterable radiance, would all our former thinking grow dim and vanish away! But it may be questioned whether, in our present state, we could understand much of the thinking of such a being; for its very luminousness might blind our eyes, and bewilder our minds. "Light, itself," as Sir Thomas Brown, quaintly but profoundly, remarks, "while it illuminates some things, casts others into shadow. The greatest mystery of religion is expressed by adumbration; and in the noblest parts of Jewish types, we find the Cherubim shadowing the Mercy Seat. The sun itself is but the dark simulacrum, and light but the shadow of God." How then can we attain the thoughts of God? How can we gaze upon the central Sun, and read the thoughts of God in the lines of infinite space? It would seem impossible. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself!" exclaims the prophet, as if blinded by the excessive light of Jehovah's countenance. Thy thoughts, O God, are very deep! "O, the depths! O, the depths!" was the repeated exclamation of an old divine, when he had gained some slight conception of the counsels of God.

It must be clear, we think, from the very nature of the case, that we cannot attain all the thoughts of God; and that, in all probability, we can attain none of them in a perfect manner. "Canst thou, by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" "Great is the mystery of godliness!" "O the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways *past finding out*!"

But we can surely attain some of the thoughts of God. In other words, God can communicate Himself unto us. He can reach our minds, put us in possession of His thoughts. And yet, some have doubted this, and insisted, because we could know little, we could know nothing of God, either from nature or from revelation. But surely this is to limit the Holy One of Israel. It is to bind God himself in the chains of a resistless fate,—a power stronger than Himself, a power which must be more than infinite, more than omnipotent—which is absurd. What! God not reveal Himself,—not embody His thoughts,—not transmit them to the mind of His creatures, if He so will it! Can we, creatures of a day, communicate with the distant, nay, with the unborn; can we incarnate our thoughts in books and works; can we send them, with lightning-speed, through a thousand miles of magnetic wire, making them luminous to the eye of the far-distant friend, and can God, the infinite, the omnipotent, not transmit His thoughts to the souls of the beings whom He has made? The idea is preposterous in itself, and moreover is stultified by facts.

Look around you, and within you, in your body, and in your soul, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and you will find the thoughts of God embodied, enshrined as it were, in living and beautiful forms. Look upwards to the heavens, amid suns and stars, and downwards to the earth, with hills and vales, woods and rivers, fruits and flowers—what see you? Thought! thought everywhere—thought embodied in permanent shapes, or leaping in living action, into permanent results. Here are wisdom the most wondrous, goodness the most amazing, power the most vast. Whose wisdom, whose goodness, whose power? Earth and sky, body and soul, themselves answer, God's! Are men blind or deaf that they do not attain these thoughts? Are they not written with sunbeams on the dark ground of heaven's concave? Are they not revealed in the beauty of the stars, in the splendor of the sun, shining down upon us from infinite depths, as if it were the eye of infinite love? Are they not characterized in green and blue, in purple and gold, upon the fair face of earth and ocean, mountain and meadow, forest and glen? Do we not hear them in the whispering winds, the rolling thunders, the rushing waves? Do we not see them, hear them, feel them, in the mystic chambers, the never-ceasing echoes of our own immortal spirit, when earth and sky are still, and nought is heard, nought is felt but the beatings of the heart?

“The world, the clustering stars, He made,
The glowing light, the soothing shade,
Dale, champaign, grove and hill,
The multitudinous abyss
Where secrecy remains in bliss,
And wisdom hides her skill.
Tell them I AM, Jehovah said
To Moses, while earth heard in dread,
And smitten to the heart,
At once, above, beneath, around,
All nature, without voice or sound,
Replied, O LORD, THOU ART !”

Yes, there are voices of God, symbols and revelations of God everywhere; and we have only to listen and read, to pause and meditate, to attain His mighty and mysterious thoughts.

But alas! we are sinners. “All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.” Hence death has cast its awful shadow over the whole race of man. Sunshine, we know, plays around our path; but clouds and darkness intermingle with it, often obscure it, and in the end, ever overpower it. We are guilty—we are condemned. Well, then, will God forgive us? Will he renew and sanctify us? Will he forgive and sanctify *me*, the chief of sinners, the vilest of the vile? If He is disposed to do so, upon what principles, and in what manner will he do it? How shall we approach Him, how assure our hearts before Him?

These are questions which neither nature nor the soul of man can answer. But God can answer them. He has answered them. "God was made flesh and dwelt among us." He came into the world, by His own beloved Son, and through that Son, has revealed His mercy, and proffered eternal life to all who repent and believe. Thus does He speak with the voice of Jesus, love with the heart of Jesus, reveal Himself in the face of Jesus. "He who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus." This is a great mystery. Nevertheless, why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should manifest himself in human form; that he should look out from human eyes, speak with human lips, love with a human heart? "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, justified of the Spirit, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Here then, we have the most intimate and cherished thoughts of God with reference to the salvation of sinners, embodied in the life and teachings, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. If then we can say, with the apostle, "We have the mind of Christ," we can also say, we have the mind of God.

"Here Love immortal leaves the sky
To wipe the weeping mourner's eye,
And give the weary rest!"

O ineffable and adorable mystery! God speaks to us in Jesus, suffers for us in Jesus, reigns for us in Jesus!

II. We proceed to inquire, briefly, in the second place, what are the characteristics of the Divine Thinking?

In the *first place*, it infinitely transcends the thinking of men or angels. "O Lord, thy thoughts are very deep. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts." God sees things as they are. At a glance, He penetrates all their essences. He comprehends them in Himself. For He is "before all things, and by Him all things consist." In Him "we live and move and have our being." The universe, therefore, lies before Him, and in Him, as a unit. He knows, He comprehends the whole—past, present, and to come, by an immediate intuition. Night and day, the darkness and the light, heaven and earth, time and eternity, are all alike to Him. So that all His thinking is infinite and absolute, without the possibility of error or of change. Our thinking, on the other hand, is limited, dependent, imperfect, a mere reflection of the truth, but not the truth itself. That exists, in its essence, only in the mind of God. Consequently, darkness and light are ever blended in our minds. We see but a few stars in a boundless depth of gloom. Beautiful, O how beautiful to life's voyagers; but far

away, in the heavens above. To us the whole creation is nothing more than the shadow of God—a shadow gloriously irradiated with light, but still a shadow. And even His Word is but an adumbration of Him. We behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Nothing here is absolutely perfect. "We see through a glass darkly." The very light, glorious as it is, is but as darkness. Its perfection often blinds our eyes; its very beauty dazzles and bewilders our minds. Every truth is thus set in mystery, enshrined in darkness, like an undying lamp in a sepulchre.

This is especially the case with the more peculiar and cherished thoughts of God, respecting sin and holiness, destruction and salvation. Hence they sometimes appear strange, startling, appalling. We know not what to make of them, so different are they from all our preconceptions upon such subjects, and are sometimes tempted to reject them altogether. But we are instantly reassured, when we think of our own weakness and ignorance, and cry out in adoring wonder, "O the depths, O the depths, both of the wisdom and the goodness of God!" Furthermore, we ought never to forget that God reveals Himself to us only in part. Hence even prophets and apostles were compelled to say: "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." Behind and beyond all the revelations of God lie undiscovered fields of thought, into which the mind of man, in its loftiest excursions, can never penetrate. So also we live only in a small corner of His dominions, and see but the outskirts of creation, the beginnings of the future, the fragments of eternity. Ages must roll away before the thoughts and designs of God, even in reference to man, are fully developed. The thoughts of God are as boundless as Himself. They embody an infinite variety of plans and particulars, yet constituting a whole, a small portion of which only can be known to us, and stretch away into the immeasurable ages of that eternity of which we see only the dim and shadowy outline. "Lo, these are a part of his ways; but the thunder (the secret) of his power who can understand?" Who, then, can sit in judgment upon the thoughts of the Almighty? Who can criticize the teachings of the Infinite Mind? Who can foretell the issues; above all, who will try to forestall the issues of His all-comprehending wisdom, purity, and grace?

Are we to teach God, or is God to teach us? Are our thoughts to be the measure of His, or His the measure of ours? Are we to make a revelation to God, or is God to make a revelation to us? And if He makes it, are we to receive it or reject it, at our pleasure—to receive its glorious teachings, or subject them to our paltry criticism and logic?

In this view, how preposterous, nay, how impious the conduct of him who, while God's Word is in his hands, insists that God must do this, or that God must do that; who affirms that such

and such a doctrine of Divine Revelation is in itself credible or incredible, because he—wonderful man—happens to think so, or because he chances to comprehend or not to comprehend it; that such and such a thing, clearly revealed, cannot take place under the government of God, simply because it comes not within the analogies or experiences with which he is familiar? Is his mind larger or more comprehensive than Christ's, than God's? Does he know more than prophets and apostles? Can he illuminate the sun, and brighten the stars of heaven? Alas! how many men, abandoning the thoughts of God, and blindly following their own or those of other men, object, and that, too, right earnestly, to the idea of salvation through the substitutionary sufferings of the Son of God; just as if it had never been said in the Scriptures that "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." They cannot endure the idea that the innocent should suffer for the guilty; that "the just," by means of suffering and sacrifice, should make an atonement for sin, and thus bring us back to God. Such substitution, they say, is unjust and wrong, impious and absurd! On which ground they are compelled to affirm that Jesus suffered only as an example, not as an atoning sacrifice; that Jehovah did not need, could not therefore require, such an expiation; that He could forgive without a sacrifice, justify without an atonement: in a word, that He could redeem us, without a suffering and dying Saviour. So that, according to this view, we really need no infinite Saviour, no shedding of blood, no mediation, no intercession. But "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord."—"Smite the shepherd," is His wondrous language, uttering the august and thrilling thought of His heart. And hence He hath "set forth" this thought before us, by "setting forth" Jesus Christ "to be a *propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Yes, God knows what is necessary in such a case. O the depths! O the depths!

"Heaven wept that man might smile,
Heaven bled that man might never die."

Thus we are led, *secondly*, to remark that the thoughts of God are especially characterized by their tender and generous aspect in reference to us. "Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us." "O how precious are thy thoughts unto me!" Why? They are a Father's thoughts!—a Father that hath "so loved us as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." "As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." His most awful and mysterious thoughts are penetrated with tenderness. All are concentrated on the salvation of

our souls. Far back in the abysses of a past eternity, and far onward in the boundless ocean of the future, His thoughts are thoughts of love. Hence he says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "For I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither death nor life, angels nor principalities, things present nor things to come, height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

A few brief inferences of a practical kind will conclude this discourse.

1. If the thoughts of God are so precious, and can be attained by us, let us give all diligence, by the study of His Word and ways, to make them our own. And when we have found a *Divine Thought*, let us cherish it in our hearts, and never, never give it up, even if it should cost us our life to keep it. "I die," said one of the old Puritan soldiers in the time of Cromwell, "I die, but truth lives; and if truth lives, I also live. Truth is only enthroned by my dying; and if truth is enthroned, I too shall be enthroned!"

2. Let us form our thinking, as far as may be, on the model of the Divine. Let us acquire the habit of thinking in the light of the Infinite. Let us fall into those trains of thought which glide towards eternity. In a word, let us "walk in the light, and thus be followers of God, as dear children." "As a man thinketh, so is he." If, then, we can only steep our souls in the truth of God, which is the thinking of God, we shall become pure and serene, like angels and glorified spirits. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

3. Let us embody all such thoughts in action; for this only will make them real to our minds and hearts. This alone will incorporate them with our moral life. "To restore a common-place-truth," says Coleridge, "to its first uncommon lustre, you need only translate it into action. But to do this, you must first have reflected on its truth." First, then, let us reflect, meditate on the thoughts of God, and then let us reduce them to action! Reflection, including prayer, is the practical basis of the Christian life—action is the superstructure. Both are indispensable to a symmetrical Christianity. For example, *God is love*; let us ever meditate upon that till the heart glows; and then go out into the world, overcoming *evil* with *good*, binding up the broken-hearted, reclaiming the wanderer, relieving the poor, in a word, benefitting and blessing all; and the idea that *God is love* will be invested with a new radiance. O what a flood of light does suffering for Christ and His cause shed upon the doctrine of the Cross. A speculator may doubt the sacrifice of Calvary, but an actor, a

worker for Christ will not. Spinoza and Hegel may lose sight of the beauty of holiness, but John Bunyan and William Brainerd never can. How precious the prospect of heaven, how beautiful, how inexpressibly beautiful the crown of glory which fadeth not away, to the eye of the dying martyr, falling asleep, amid agony and shame, in the full vision of the glory of God! "And now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?"

O God, thy thoughts are very deep! But O how precious! how tender and kind! With trembling and joy we receive them, as our hearts' best treasure. We receive especially the doctrine of the Cross, and glory in it, as the light and life of our sin-stricken but immortal spirits. And now to Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood—to the only wise God and our Saviour Jesus Christ—be glory for ever and ever, Amen!